



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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GOVERNOR

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SECRETARY

**North Carolina Board of Transportation  
Environmental Planning and Policy Committee  
Meeting Minutes for April 2, 2003**

A meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee (EPPC) was held on April 2, 2003 at 8:00 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building. Nina Szlosberg chaired the meeting. Other Board of Transportation members that attended were:

Tom Betts	Nina Szlosberg
Conrad Burrell	Alan Thornburg
Nancy Dunn	Lanny Wilson
Doug Galyon	Marvin Blount III
Cam McRae	

Other attendees included:

David Allsbrook	Berry Jenkins	Sandy Nance
Craig Deal	Fred Lamar	Ken Pace
Steve DeWitt	Emily Lawton	Allen Pope
Janet D'Ignazio	Don Lee	Bill Rosser
Cherie Gibson	Sharon Lipscomb	Roger Sheats
Carl Goode	Robin M. Little	Roy Shelton
Gail Grimes	Carl McCann	Jay Swain
Rob Hanson	Ehren Meister	Greg Thorpe
Mike Holder	Mike Mills	Jim Trogon
Julie Hunkins	Sarah Mitchell	Don Voelker
David Hyder	Jon Nance	Marcus Wilner

Ms. Szlosberg called the meeting to order. The meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Ms. Szlosberg opened the meeting by introducing Janet D'Ignazio, Chief Officer for Planning and the Environment, to follow up on last month's agenda item on the Smart Growth Commission and its list of recommendations.

Ms. D'Ignazio opened by stating that the purpose of her presentation was to report on NCDOT's implementation efforts regarding the Smart Growth recommendations and to gather feedback concerning potential policy recommendations that may require action by the Board.

The report was released with little public discussion. The term “smart growth” has the potential to be controversial and it is by no means the intent of the department to implement smart growth. Ms. D’Ignazio explained that smart growth implementation is a legislative issue and is a mechanism to assist communities with how they grow.

Ms. D’Ignazio noted that there is an overlap between the goals of the Smart Growth Commission and the goals of good transportation implementation. Therefore, there is already a tremendous amount that the department is currently doing under the umbrella of balancing transportation implementation and smart growth planning. If North Carolina becomes a “smart growth state”, NCDOT will already be in a good position to support the goals of smart growth.

What are NCDOT’s interests in terms of growth and development within the state? The critical piece to a good transportation system is having local land use plans that look at transportation needs twenty years from now. If those plans don’t exist, the department doesn’t know what kind of transportation needs a community may have. The department also cares whether the land use planning is tasked into account environmentally sensitive resources. Because of the environmental permitting requirements, NCDOT is unable to build transportation infrastructure if development and the infrastructure will occur in an environmentally protected area. NCDOT is also wants for transportation infrastructure to be fiscally reasonable. Communities should not assume that NCDOT will build an infrastructure that will cost billions of investment dollars. Further, we want local governments to promote good land use plans, including transportation improvements, that the community has created and endorsed.

One of the most important recommendations from the smart growth commission was the first goal: Land Use and Transportation Linkages. This goal really illustrates the importance of how transportation can effect land use. This goal reflects several things. First, integration between all types of planning is important: transportation, air quality, land use, economic development, and infrastructure developments. Further, integration at different levels such as local state, and federal should be included. This will allow consistency in planning. The commission also looked at flexibility as a key component to land use and transportation integration. Communities must have flexibility in their use of funding and be able to tailor their transportation objectives around their needs. The department has actually done a lot of work around this specific goal. These activities include:

- Transportation Planning Law
  - Land Use Planning requirement
  - Transportation Plan vs. Thoroughfare Plan
- RPO Implementation
- MPO Consolidation Legislation
- SWP geographic organization
- DOT/DENR/Commerce Secretarial Council
- State Long Range Plan (NCMIN)
- Access Management Report
- Driveway Manual
- Modeling Unit
- Air Quality Roundtable

Two years ago there was a major change in the transportation planning law that enabled NCDOT to assist local communities in their planning. At that time the term “thoroughfare plan” was changed to “transportation plan.” At a future meeting, management will present to the committee a proposal on how the department wants to change the planning process from simple thoroughfare plans to broad-based, multi-modal, integrated, transportation planning. Another major component of this law is that communities must adopt “land development” plans within five years.

RPO implementation has given the department a rural partner to advise us on rural regional issues. The development of RPO’s also allows for separation from the urban areas, which are represented by the MPO’s. In addition, MPO consolidation has allowed for less fragmentation in more urban areas and has been an important part of addressing air quality issues. Each of the MPO’s with local air quality issues is required to have a single air quality strategy.

The department has restructured the Statewide Planning Branch around geographic areas. This facilitates communication and helps with coordinating transportation planning with the local areas. A Secretarial Council has also been created between NCDOT, NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the NC Department of Commerce. One of the issues they have been working on is the integration of land use and transportation. The council, which is led by the Department of Commerce’s Division of Community Assistance, has been looking at ways the three agencies can support each other in terms of transportation planning.

One of the issues that has and will continue to be discussed is the State Long Range Plan and the NC Multi-Modal Investment Network (NCMIN). NCMIN has categorized the 78,000 miles of roads that are state-owned into the categories of statewide significance, regional significance and sub-regional significance. Investment strategies, certain types of decision-making and broad-based issues can be discussed and developed around these categories.

Access management is another important transportation-land use integration issue. Access management is where driveways are being cut into our roadway system to create accessibility to lands. This is perhaps the smallest decision that NCDOT makes that demonstrates the relationship between transportation and land use. NCDOT’s Driveway Manual also addresses access management.

The department’s Modeling Unit and the Air Quality Roundtable also address this specific goal of transportation and land use linkage. Transportation modeling is one of the fundamental tools used when addressing long-range goals. The Modeling Unit is a group of experts that maintain NCDOT’s state of the art modeling programs and methodology. The Air Quality Roundtable, a partnership made up of federal, state and local interests, has a big part to play because of the importance of using broad-based planning, transportation and land use solutions to improve overall air quality.

The second goal of the Smart Growth Commission’s transportation recommendations deals with the financial aspects of smart growth. This goal targets two things: balancing transportation investments (maintenance vs. construction) and modes (transit, road, rail, etc). Ms. D’Ignazio indicated that this goal suggests that DOT dollars for smart growth. Some states use transportation monies as an incentive to change land use patterns; the Smart Growth Committee’s transportation recommendations include a specific goal that targets this. There is also a goal that recommends more flexible use of the money. Most of the goals associated with this recommendation

are goals that the department has very little control over. Therefore, the department has done a number of things in attempt to address these funding issues at a micro-management scale. These activities are:

- Highway Trust Fund Study Committee
- Increases in maintenance & public transportation budgets
- Cash management legislation
- North Carolina: Moving Ahead!
- State Long Range Plan

Ms. D'Ignazio pointed out that the Highway Trust Fund Study has not been done but it looks like the legislature will reauthorize it. Some of the small things the department has been able to accomplish over recent years is to make recommendations to increase the funding for maintenance and public transportation. Further, the cash management legislation last year allowed the department to use some of the Highway Trust Fund dollars for other uses such as pavement preservation.

The Governor's program, North Carolina: Moving Ahead! also targets small improvements for which we currently have no funding. The State Long Range Plan will also be key for investment strategies and will allow for debate on how to equitably divide the funding for investments, whether by transportation modes, maintenance, or the modernization of the current transportation infrastructure. The State Long Range plan will be coming forward to the Board in the near future.

Goal three involves the development of multi-modal transportation systems. This includes how multi-modal systems are funded and incentives for the use of diverse systems. These goals are generally planning recommendations coupled with an increase in the amount of money available for multi-modal systems. The activities the department is doing to support this goal include:

- Transportation Planning Law
- Bicycle and pedestrian mainstreaming
- Budget recommendations
- Cash management legislation
- North Carolina: Moving Ahead!
- TND Subdivision Guidelines

In addition to the previous activities explained already, there are two other issues. Several years ago a federal policy was enacted dealing with mainstreaming bike and pedestrian improvements. A committee has been created to look at exactly how the process works and how to include bike and pedestrian projects early and throughout the road building process. Recommendations for improvements in this area will be forthcoming by the committee. In addition, the Board adopted Traditional Neighborhood Development Subdivision Guidelines that regulate traditional subdivisions and allow for flexibility in construction if developers choose. All these activities encourage smart growth.

The fourth goal is transportation connectivity. The first sub goal deals with continued flexibility and the second sub goal deals with collector streets. To understand how the two sub-goals relate to transportation interconnectivity, one must recognize that the sub-goals specifically address the four-lane portion of the

Highway Trust Fund, which is intended to be our interconnected statewide transportation system.. The activities around this goal have already been explained and are:

- State Long Range Plan (NCMIN)
- Highway Trust Fund Study Committee
- Access Management Report

The fifth goal is to encourage regionalism. Ms. D'Ignazio noted that this goal is closely related to portions of the Commission's first goal of linking the transportation system with land use. Furthermore, this goal encourages regionalism within our state, which commonly identifies its land in individual sections. A key aspect of this goal is the growing concern for air quality issues and the fact that air quality is a regional interest. The activities implemented by the DOT are:

- MPO Consolidation Legislation
- RPO Implementation

The MPO legislation is directly responding to these issues. The Commission has also recommended that air quality analysis areas be aligned with planning regions, which can be done.

The sixth goal identified by the Commission references the importance of public involvement and the connection and communication with stakeholder values. The department has done a lot already in achieving some of the aspects of this goal. Some of the activities include:

- Merger 01 Permitting Process Improvement
- Geographic organization of Statewide Planning Branch
- Expansion of Office of Human Environment

RPO's and MPO's are now included on the Merger Teams when projects are being developed. The Merger Teams are the interagency groups that come together during the project development stages that discuss purpose and need, identify alternatives to be studied, etc. Early and continuous communication with the local communities through the RPO's and MPO's will occur through these Merger teams.

The Office of Human Environment (OHE) has recently gone through tremendous expansion. Numerous positions have been added to this unit, and OHE has moved from Pre-construction within the Division of Highways to the Office of Planning and the Environment. The vision is to expand this unit even more as public involvement is needed to provide transportation projects that meet the needs of the communities and garner public support.

Given all six Commission goals some of the recommendations that the EPPC can take on are:

- Adoption of Access Management Report
- State Long Range Plan
  - Investment scenarios
  - NCMIN
  - Policy Recommendations
- Transportation Planning Law
  - Land Use Plan acceptability
  - Inter-jurisdictional cooperation
- Conservation development standards

Notably and with respect to the transportation planning law, the EPPC can be helpful in assisting with the definition of land use plan. There currently is no definition -- only a requirement to have a land use plan. Ms. D'Ignazio notes that NCDOT's leadership would like to work with the Board to identify what a suitable and acceptable land use or development plan is. The issue of inter-jurisdictional cooperation and connection between the stakeholders could further benefit from some policy recommendations from the Board. Finally, conservation development standards could be accommodated. (Conservation development standards are for lower impact development and are being pushed by storm water regulations.) It would be ideal for the Board to assist with the development of these standards.

In summary, legislative action is needed before NCDOT can implement all of the Commission's transportation recommendations. Finally, NCDOT is implementing legislative, policy and administrative changes to support many of the overlapping goals of the Smart Growth Commission.

Board Member Nancy Dunn commented that the presentation was very helpful as a follow up from last month's EPPC agenda.

Ms. Szlosberg noted that the distinction was noted several times between the land use and development plans and asked for clarification. Ms. D'Ignazio noted that discussion occurred more at the legislature than with the Commission. What was stated was that a land development plan is geared towards small communities and requires future growth indicators such as sewer and water development. These indicators won't necessarily work for large communities, such as High Point.

Board Member Frank Johnson noted that some of the points in the presentation indicated that there is a need for additional staffing and that there's a potential for separation between the planning segments of the department and its divisions. He clarified his comments by noting that the NCDOT divisions should be integrally involved with all aspects of systems planning, projects development, construction and maintenance. The division offices are most familiar with the communities they serve and , as such, are in a good position to make recommendations.

Ms. Dunn noted the importance of flexibility for supporting the transportation recommendations from the Smart Growth Commission and that the department would be remised if it didn't take a statewide approach to the recommendations. Ms. Szlosberg noted that if there are any further issues that need to be addressed based on the Smart Growth Commission recommendations to notify Julie Hunkins.

Ms. Szlosberg introduced David Allsbrook, Deputy Chief Engineer for Operations, to present the quarterly report on the State Minimum Criteria (SMC). She reminded the committee that the SMC are the rules that allow the department to move forward on small, non-environmentally damaging or controversial projects without environmental documentation. The EPPC requested that the Division of Highways present a quarterly report to the EPPC outlining the department's use of the criteria.

Mr. Allsbrook distributed a handout that identified a list of projects that have been utilized the SMC since November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002. He noted that the report identifies the specific projects that fell within three of the minimum criteria categories, as noted on the handout. A total of 134 projects have been completed, representing approximately 100 miles of roadway and 245 acres of disturbed area. He noted that Division 6 and 10 show zero projects because their SMC documentation occurred prior to November. These divisions will be very

active on the next quarterly report. This report shows that very little wetland impacts have occurred and that the minimum criteria are working very well.

Ms. Szlosberg asked for clarification about the paving of roadways and the impact of impervious surfaces. Mr. Allsbrook replied that they consider existing roads as impervious, whether paved or unpaved, and the only way to increase impacts due to run-off is by widening the existing roadway footprint. Ms. Dunn asked how this data compares to the overall work of the department (TIP included) during the same time period and if there's a percentage that can be identified. He stated that he would look into this. He noted that almost 100 percent of non-TIP projects are likely to fall within the State Minimum Criteria.

Ms. Szlosberg introduced David Hyder, Office of Human Environment, to update the EPPC on the department's Alternative Fuels Working Group. She noted that this topic was on previous EPPC agendas and originally came from the Governor's air quality agenda.

Mr. Hyder noted that the Alternative Fuels Working Group began their work by looking at what others were doing and what might ideas are appropriate for possible implementation at NCDOT. Several state DOT's are changing purchasing policies to buy vehicles that meet future diesel fuel standards, as well as implementing clean fuel policies in construction projects. NCDOT is beginning to investigate the potential use of hybrid powered engines and the cost of these prototypes may create difficulties in transition.

The department is also looking at the use of Lubrizol, which the EPPC had the opportunity to review at a previous meeting, and expansion of NCDOT's bio-diesel program. This program has very large potential. NCDOT needs to investigate bio-diesel emissions more closely, to study the potential of a clean diesel construction program, implement a fuel cell pilot project and prototype a heavy hybrid vehicle. There are still a lot of questions to be answered concerning some of the projects and information noted. A cost benefit analysis will also help to identify the associated impacts of these options. Mr. Hyder noted that more detailed information will be presented at a future EPPC meeting. Ms. Szlosberg asked whether a representative from the Associated General Contractors (AGC) was on the work group. She requested that AGC be invited to participate in the work group's discussions.

The next meeting for the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, April 30, 2003 at 8:00 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building.

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